



Acton Historic District Commission
Meeting 9/27/2011
Minutes

TOWN CLERK, ACTON

Meeting was opened at 7:30 by Chair, Kathy Acerbo-Bachman (KAB).

Also present were Pam Lynn (PL), Anita Rogers (AR), David Honn (DH), Ron Rose (RR), Michaela Moran (MM) after West Acton sign meeting, and David Barrat (DB).

There were no citizens' concerns.

HDC Minutes of August 23, 2011 and September 13, 2011 were approved by consent unanimously.

7:45 Daniel Bourdeau and Rene Bourdeau: Reference to printout. Offer to purchase house at 497 Main Street has been accepted. No purchase and sale agreement yet. Discussion will not produce anything binding until they are the owners. The house was built in 1836 with original dimensions of 37.8' by 16'. The addition in the back was built later, ca. 1880. The property needs a new septic system. Kitchen, 2 bedrooms. Roof needs repair. The owners intend to work with the existing roofline. They will keep the main section having two chimneys. The proposed addition will be centered off the back of the house between the two chimneys. Fourteen and a half feet of structure will show from the road. KAB This is a fabulous house. RR The current 1880 addition offers no contributing factors. It would be better for the addition to be around back. KAB Geometry will require new addition to have the same same pitch. If the ridge is higher than the original roofline, it will never look right. Ridge must be no higher than the original ridgeline. The roof is pretty shallow. Won't approve a drop in eave line. Suggest 24' by 20' addition at rear of the house. DH Addition will be visible from the street.

8:00 Acton 20-20 Celia Kent (CK) from Acton 20-20 present. Level of strategies. KAB HDC has threads in everything else beyond historic character. CK HDC Needs to be involved in the final role. Roland Bartl should be part of the administration and support for preservation. CK HDC Does not need to be involved in Kelly's Corner plans. Not in our jurisdiction. Acton has a unique history. Need HDC involvement where appropriate back as first page citing landscaping as a part of town's character. Third Item on first page Landscaping need to be its own strategy. CK Development of urban design plan. Placemaking. Traffic issues 2.3. Reduce emissions. Promote green areas. Heating of ground when there is loss of tree cover. Improve maintenance of ground temperature. Allow white roofing. Color not in HDC's jurisdiction. Reference to Trees on P. 6. Does white roofing affect the town's character? Is this a Design Review Board Issue. If color were under HDC jurisdiction, white roofs would be an issue. It depends on which buildings would have white roofs. Color control would be a benefit and could be a possible strategy. Acton has not been active in tree planting. The town has a poor track record. From 1980 to 2009 tree planting has been minimal. We have no jurisdiction over large trees. Some cities like Arlington include trees as objects in historic districts. Trees cannot be eliminated in

historic districts. It is a part of historic district objectives to integrate trees in the overall strategy.

Referring to P. 7 Guidelines regarding flat or pitched roofs are subject to review. Rooflines in the HD have guidelines and are subject to review.

DH The objectives are all very ambitious. Need to shepherd the master plan to prevent lack of action. Need a full time guru to push it. Someone who can work across all departments to make it happen. This is a \$100k/year person. CK Create a volunteer board. We couldn't pay them. This needs a lot of authority including the power to implement. A senior staff person who reports to the town manager. Our zoning code doesn't support these objectives. We will need money to rewrite the code. We need to start over to strengthen language in goals. Rewrite the zoning code to meet master plan objectives. West Acton has the potential to be a viable village. Need to show how it should be developed. Otherwise it's just ideas and words. Kelly's Corner is not subject to control. Nothing to work with. There is a lack of resources. If West Acton is to develop into a cutesy(?) village formula, there needs to be town commitment.

AR Interest in zoning; can't support this innovation. RR Worried Reference to 5.2. Support household ability to subdivide single residential lot. Unable to stop owners getting what they wanted under the zoning code-couldn't stop this if divisions of buildings pre-empt, way too broad. Zoning by-law not well considered to provide affordable housing.

A little 40B. Residential compounds. Incorporate into stronger design guidelines. MM Affordable housing strategies 9/28. MM Pass by all goals trying to incorporate in town basis in law #1 priority find a way to codify it. RR Business friendly 7.3 Improve sign by-law, already involved in that. KAB School's #1 priority McCarthy-Towne in state measure the number of students There are four times as many students . Everett, Chelsea, etc. Medford all talking about density. At risk reason to move to Acton essential parts schools not as good as 20 years ago due to increased classroom size. Classrooms are becoming overcrowded and this harms students.

Another issue is to get older people to stay in Acton. We need a diversity in housing. Telling us that enrollment is going down. Fewer school people not being addressed. Student scores are dropping; teachers are overburdened. Statistics: 50-60 building permits are pulled per year.

HDC Points low or even no interest loans for historic preservation. Landscaping needs to be its own strategy. Open space ways no clear cutting minimum tree canopy by-law. 1/3 or 1/4 of lots to remain wooded. CK wants example of this.

KAB Landscaping and trees should be its own thing Watershed advantages, capture CO₂ Habitat historic landscaping. Twenty years earlier the Master Plan was almost identical. The objectives were achieved. Public meeting with 1-3 separate strategies. The three strategies are all almost the same. Master Plan now Identified to strategize #3 are almost the same.

Zone changes were attempted but failed. Have rewrite of the zoning by-law, have more extensions, guide lines, mandatory design review for landscaping, trees and schools and for the whole town. DH Other towns have Design Review Boards. Fire, health, engineers

projects. Kicked around. Comments received from those with expertise and from staff all on the take. Not bounced around. MM Applicant chooses who he sees first and learns to play one against the other.

PL Numbers are good over time. Classes of 55 bursting at the seams at 2000 kids Elizabeth Warren "The Two-Income Trap." Teachers are attracted to more affluent communities where parents are more willing to make the necessary sacrifices in personal comfort to ensure that their children get the best education possible. More affordable housing attracts people to move to Acton but not to stay after children are grown.

MM Thirty percent of families moving into Acton are double-income families. They are not involved in the activities in the schools their children attend and leave Acton after the children graduate. One of the strategies to be considered is more affordable housing for middle management or single-income. Is it possible to create a community you want? Uncertain.

9:00 CPC Present is David Martin (DM) from South Acton Train Station Advisory Committee (SATSAC). There was a public hearing last Thursday evening. The "T" has allocated \$60K for landscaping. The site will need more like \$150K to allow more flora. Landscaping is a key project. The South Acton train station abuts the South Acton Historic District. Landscaping was a prominent part of the Section 106 review. Mass. Historic Commission supports the landscaping project. CPC also supports it. Is it legal to use CPC funds for SATS landscaping. A question for town counsel. Initiating funding for a street tree project may be precedent setting. Will SATSAC co-sponsor it? DM is okay with this but asks who does what? Brick plaza at the train station may be supported. Uncertain about trees. This needs to be set up so the town does the brick plaza and have the "T" do the trees.

KAB Within a week town counsel will say yes or no to go forward. DH If TC says yes and CPC says yes stuck with change order. Will not get as much bang for the buck. \$150K will go to the designers, resulting in a loss of funds for materials. Use the add-alternate method. Need some assurance that the town will come up with the money.

The deadline for bidding is next Thursday. Ninety percent proposed. 100% to be submitted in December. "T" will not want big changes; will separate some items. Landscaping bad term site plan design elements-sidewalks, trees, ground-cover. It is a contest of interesting vs. uninteresting.

RR If CPC funding is impossible, find funding though line item in the regular budget. All money good materials use extra for gross real landscape seeding. Easier to add planting incrementally. Pave early and plant incrementally. The fear is that landscaping may suffer diminished interest in time. CPC is very positive about the "T"s landscaping platform in order to hide the wall. DH, RR and Peter Lucacic (sp?) will gather for the T's meeting and propose a \$150K budget.

The minimum-maintenance demonstration by neglect by-law. Grant no-interest or low-interest loans. Start with loan program if not working bring in other pieces. Other

communities do this., Great Barrington does this. CPC more positive for this plan. Do a list of towns who do this. \$200K for an initial few homes. Create a revolving fund for loans. How do other towns do this.?

DH Nice to have 1 grant per year for good will for oldsters, a gift of good will.

90 School Street: MM Recused herself but remained as a concerned citizen. Property owners of 18-19th century house they want to demolish and build new house. It is a contributing building. DH The owners have let the property deteriorate by neglect. Deadline for decision is October 26, 2011.

West Acton Sign Meetings: MM is HDC representative. There have been two meetings so far. There was one business owner at the first meeting and four at the second. Roland Bartl presented the current sign by-law to the attendees. Compared the HD regulations with the non-HD regulations. By right non-residential signs can be as large as 6 square feet while residential signs are limited to 2 square feet. Signs in the HD must be approved by HDC. Exception is the directional, "open", "closed" type signs. Window signs are prohibited in HDs. This met with surprise. Issue: What is sign display area structure? Next meeting is Friday, 7AM at Theatre III.

Meeting adjourned at 9:50.

Respectfully submitted


David T. Barrat,
Secretary